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Wish for child: Possibilities of the digital age and its consequences for reproductive medicine and psychosomatics

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Background: The internet delivers options for having a child, which have a special place in psychological counseling in context of family planning and reproductive health. Our aim was to systematize the field of research of “internet and wish for child” in order to represent the current state of research.

Method: Systematic literature research was done using relevant medical and psychological literature databases (e.g., PubMed, PsycInfo); search period: last 10 years (2007–2017).

Results: It was found that dating platforms for singles wishing a child can support relationship building. Through connection websites, female singles can search for sperm donors; criteria being certain ideas of appearance, intelligence and personality. Whereas, sperm donors are the more comfortable in informal donation via internet and that recipients can be selected. In sum, more sperm donors registered online than in clinics. Other possibilities are the initiation of egg donation via internet agencies or finding surrogates via online-platforms. Through co-parenting, single men can find a family: they can contact women via online forums to procreate a child and then raise their child together with close coordination, but without having an obligation for an established relationship. Motives are finding an arrangement that fulfills the desire having a child and which is similar to traditional family patterns.

Discussion: There are also concerns about initiating sperm donation or family forming online, because it is not clinically controlled. Arrangements, medical and personal factors are not proven, hence there are certain medicinal and emotional risks.

Biography

Christiane Eichenberg completed her PhD in 2006 at the University of Cologne and Habilitation in 2010 at the Ilmenau University of Technology. She is Professor and Head of the Institute of Psychosomatics, Medical Faculty at the Sigmund Freud Private University. She is also a Psychotherapist (psychoanalysis). She has published more than 60 peer-reviewed papers in journals, given oral presentations at international conferences and published books about E-mental Health, Self-treatment and Self-medication, Psychotraumatology and Online-counseling.

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